

Film Review

A Spy Thriller

By HELEN ANNE ASPBURY

WORDS like "suspenseful," "thrilling" and "shattering" have, through constant use, lost much of their power when applied to films. "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold," now playing at the Charles and Westview Cinema, completely restores the impact in these words.

A good deal of the film's power lies in its immediacy. The Cold War, the Berlin Wall, the precarious world situation are unfortunate but immediate realities, and they provide the setting for the picture.

But "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold" is more than a statement of frightening and suspenseful realities. It involves—and reveals—the artistic talents of director, actors, cameramen, and the originator of the whole thing, author John Le Carre.

Ugly Business

This film is the antithesis of *James Bond* and his followers. Here, the business of spying is ugly, intricate, and singularly unglamorous. The "villians," rather than being superhuman fiends, are real people, as dedicated to their cause as the Allied spies are to their own.

While films in the *James Bond* genre are enjoyable because of the glamour, the elaborate effects and the humor, "Spy Who Came in From the Cold" is enjoyable—or perhaps appreciable is a better word—because it could be, and possibly is, the truth.

Good Camerawork

The camerawork in the film is exceptional. The black-and-white cameras move almost stealthily at times, focusing closely on a face, then backing up to include an entire scene. It is for the most part stark, realistic photography that records a scene without trying to be arty about it.

Director Martin Ritt has kept his film going at a pace that moves swiftly, slackens, then picks up again, without producing

a jerky effect. He uses quick, startling transitions at the beginning and at several points later in the picture, but he does not overdo it. He has succeeded in keeping total coherence and relevance in a plot that becomes increasingly intricate.

Characters Believable

To the credit of both the author and the cast, each character is totally believable, and engrossing in his own way. The weary *Control* (Cyril Cusack) questions halfheartedly whether so-called defensive and worthy motives on the part of the Allies can justify their employing the same tactics used by the so-called aggressive enemy. He questions, but he continues to do his job.

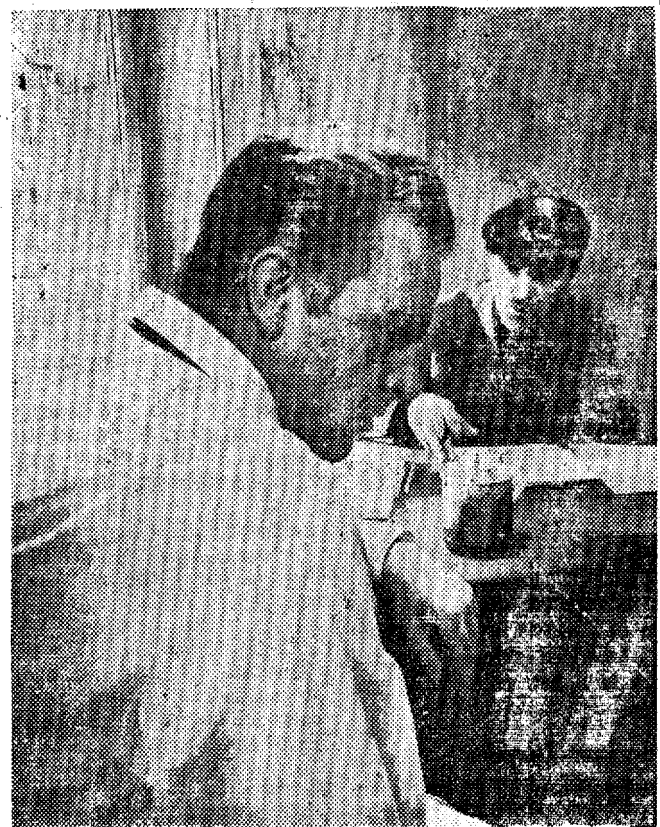
The girl (Claire Bloom) has turned to the Communist party in an effort to find direction. Both sides are able to use her, not because she is stupid, but because she needs to believe, and in her naivete does believe, in a "cause."

The central character, *Alec Leamas* (Richard Burton) is a man simple in his dedication but complex in his ideas. He accepts any duty that falls within his sphere, and carries it out. But as a person—beyond his existence as a spy—he manifests an intricate combination of cynicism and idealism.

Burton's Role

Richard Burton's *Leamas* is a fully drawn, beautifully portrayed character. At times in previous films Burton has relied heavily on his magnificent voice to cover an incompletely developed character, but in this film he is outstanding, vocally, emotionally and intellectually.

Oskar Werner, in the part of *Fiedler*, assistant to the German spy chief, is superb. Mr. Werner succeeds in making his character so intelligent and earnest that, no matter how much you disagree



Alec Leamas (Richard Burton) is interrogated by Fiedler (Oskar Werner), in this scene from "The Spy Who Came in From The Cold," now at the Charles and Westview Cinema Theaters. Claire Bloom is costarred in the Martin Ritt production of John Le Carre's spy novel.

with what he stands for, you are convinced that he is sincerely and totally committed to this stand. *Fiedler*, as portrayed by Werner, evokes both respect and sympathy.

Mr. Werner's performance is at once dynamic and controlled. Where one gesture or one slight change in expression suffices, he confines himself to that one gesture or expression. Every mannerism and every inflection is keyed strictly to the revelation of character, and there is nothing extraneous. Werner's final gesture sums up one of the film's major points more clearly than three minutes of dialogue or action could do.

Others In Cast

The rest of the cast, which includes Peter Van Eyck, Sam Wanamaker, George Voskovec and Rupert Davies, is also excellent.

It does not seem necessary to go into the plot of the film. Those who have read the book already know it, and those who haven't might find it confusing, seeing it condensed into a few lines.

It is enough to say that, even if the particulars of the story were not so contemporary, the general plot line would generate more suspense and interest than any average spy film.

On a superficial basis, this is a superb effort in the spy film category. On a broader basis, taking in all of its ramifications, "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold" is an exceptional film, in any category.